



Eichhorst visiting Pristina: EU welcomes announcement on start drafting Statute of the Association/Community



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Angelina Eichhorst, Director for Western Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, and Deputy Managing Director in the European External Action Service (EEAS), was on a two-days visit in Pristina to address recent developments and urgent next steps.

Together with Kosovo's political leaders, from both ruling and opposition parties, societal and security representatives, Eichhorst discussed Kosovo's European integration agenda following the adoption of the Commission's new Western Balkans Strategy and in view of the upcoming annual reports, including for Kosovo, due to be released on 17 April.

'The people of Kosovo can read in the report a first hand assessment of Kosovo's progress in implementing its Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the European Reform Agenda. Questions of upholding international legislation, rule of law, justice, transparency, due legal process, fair trial, fighting corruption and organised crime are important elements against which progress will be measured. By staying committed to the EU agenda, as its strategic orientation, Kosovo can look forward to constructive, effective and fruitful cooperation, with the EU and in the region as a whole', said Eichhorst.

She mentioned the importance of the successful vote in the Assembly which ratified the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro, a long awaited and crucial step towards visa liberalisation. She also welcomed the positive work on recent legislation passed in the Assembly. 'The signal of functioning solid institutions is much needed, at times when there are questions, also amongst the population here, not just in Brussels, and when wisdom, confidence and leadership are fundamental'.

Special emphasis was given to the EU facilitated Belgrade Pristina Dialogue and recent events in Mitrovica which put the security of the Serbia Chief Negotiator and of many people living and working in the north at risk.

Eichhorst underlined that any disagreements between Belgrade and Pristina need to be addressed and solved peacefully in and through the Dialogue, and emphasised the urgent need to accelerate the implementation of agreements reached. 'Kosovo should implement the agreement on the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities without any further delay', she said.

In this regard Eichhorst warmly welcomed Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj's announcement on the start of the work of the Management Team. 'We will now invite the Chief Negotiators from Belgrade and Pristina, their teams, as well as the Management Team and technical experts, for discussions in Brussels, and to engage constructively and in good faith in the drafting process', she said.

Eichhorst also mentioned the delay in the implementation of the energy agreement, and reminded urgent resolve is needed allowing Kosovo to be part of regional electricity transmission mechanisms.

As regards the recent arrest and extradition of six Turkish nationals legally residing in Kosovo, and the subsequent investigation launched by Prime Minister Haradinaj, Eichhorst said that the extradition raised many questions in Brussels, on due process, transparency and justice. "In line with Kosovo's determination to work jointly on a free

and democratic future, as also set out in the SAA, all actions of the institutions are bound by the full respect for the rule of law and promotion of universal respect for and observance of international rules and norms also when it comes to extradition.'

Finally the continued commitment of Kosovo to the Specialist Chambers demonstrates courage and determination to make further progress towards EU integration, and to make genuine efforts aimed at guaranteeing the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, justice and reconciliation. The role of EULEX to assist Kosovo in building capacity of its rule of law institutions, creating a multi-ethnic justice system, free from political interference was also addressed during the meetings.

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